

A journey with success as its destination - MDRT, New Orelans 2015

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Hats and scarves for sale is a familiar chant along the route to Croke Park, as much banter and craic amongst fans from opposing counties form part of the excitement and sense of occasion that is All-Ireland Final Day.

Businesswise, the first day of MDRT bears favourable comparison. The sense of expectation and the sheer thrill of attending this great event is clearly evident amongst the record 10,000 delegates as they descend upon the auditorium. This conference reaches out to a global audience with representatives from 67 countries. No Cork, Kilkenny or Tipperary accents can be heard, but rather the multi-linguistic speaking the common language of MDRT.

The pomp and ceremony of the opening day is a joy to behold. The razzmatazz, the music audible from every corner sets the rhythmic tempo tone of great things to come. Then we have the clash of the ash as the game commences at 8am, no hurleys on display but a tight grip is held by each representative as they carry with pride, one by one, their national flag onto the stage before it was down to the serious business of the conference. Having surfaced at 6.30am, we did not depart our seats until 5.30pm. Unlike the All-Ireland final there were no losers, just all winners who had feasted upon a menu of motivation, knowledge, camaraderie, inspiration, and thought-provoking ideas.

Main platform speakers

This is the place to be, the heat of the battle and the rush for seats. Over three days we were addressed

by world class speakers, experts in their field bringing oratory to a new level with tales of human endeavour and bravery, while others imparted sound business advice...what the mind can perceive and believe, it can achieve.

The following were the highlights for me:

Amy Purdy took to the stage like a ballerina. Small wonder she inspired millions of fans with her stunning performances on ABC's *Dancing with the Stars*. She then proceeded to screw off her feet and told a stunned audience her story. She lost both her legs below the knee after contracting bacterial meningitis. Adversity causes some people to break and others to break records, and today Amy is one of the highest ranking adaptive snowboarders in the world. She spoke of how obstacles and challenges force us to be creative. Amy is not limited by her circumstances but rather has used them to open up new doors. She feels enabled and not disabled... what an attitude, what a heroine!

'Happiness Leads to Productivity' was the title of an interesting presentation by **Shaun Anchor** who is regarded as one of the world's leading experts on the connection between happiness and success. His work has received attention in the Wall Street Journal, New York Times, Forbes and Businessweek. Pearls of wisdom he imparted were:

- Happiness is a choice... positive psychology
- Happiness spreads greatest competitive advantage
- 10/5 way was a successful methodology used by Ritz Carlton Group
- Work on a mind-set of positive habits.

For example:

1. 21 days... think three positive/new things daily – 63
2. 30 minutes of physical exercise everyday
3. Send a two-minute text or email praising someone you know. Do it to someone different for 21 days.

When **Thomas L Friedman** talks, we listen. Winner of three Pulitzer Prizes, he is ranked second on the Wall Street Journal's list of influential business thinkers and is considered one of America's Best Leaders by US News & World Report. His advice to us was this:

- Technology continues to change our world
- Take time to pause and reflect:
 - What unique skill can I bring to my job?
 - Always think like a new immigrant (hunger and drive)
 - Always think like an artisan adding value
 - Always think like a starter upper in silicon valley
 - $PQ + CQ > IQ$.
 - Passion Quotient + Curiosity Quotient > Intelligence Quotient
- Be motivated and entrepreneurial.

Scott Harrison founded the charity Water in 2006. Today he is a World Economic Forum Young Global Leader, recognised in Fortune magazine's 40 under 40. By his own admission he sowed his wild oats until, aged 28, he heard the story of Letikiros. His life changed and so did the life of millions. It was heart rendering to hear the story of 13-year-old Letikiros, an Ethiopian girl who walked eight miles every day with a container of water, until one day she fell and the contents of her container spilled. Rather than return home empty handed, she hung herself. Inspired by this story, Harrison has raised more than US\$180 million, and funded 12,000 water projects in 22 countries which have helped 5.2 million people to now drink clear water!

'Failure is not an option, it is a privilege reserved for those who try.' Using this quote from Albert Einstein, the scene was set for a Tour De Force by **Delatorro L. McNeal** who gave a superb presentation in content and delivery. He partners with Fortune 500 corporations, associations and entrepreneurs to drastically improve organisational effectiveness, sales performance, communication strategies and employee morale and productivity. He opened our minds to personal interrogation and reflection:

- Will you be better than yesterday?
- How can you use today to impact tomorrow?
- The biggest room in the world is the room for self-improvement.



An international gathering attending The Leprechaun Life lunch with guest of honour Caroline Banks, 2015 President MDRT.

Unlock your true potential using combination of:

Change

- Embrace evolutionary change.
- When you change your thinking you change your life.
- Dodge the bullets of negativity.
- Focus on what's going right, not what's going wrong.

Challenge

- High achievers are forced to lead while they bleed.
- Extraordinary people overcome extraordinary challenges.
- Be the ball, not the egg – be resilient and able to bounce back.
- Know your value. Like your fingerprint, it's unique to you.

Commit to mastery

- Master your industry, craft with hard and soft skills.
- Commit to being extraordinary because average is over.
- 30 day exercise - pick one area to improve 1% each day so at the end of 30 days you have improved by 30%.

Platon is an award-winning photographer who has produced more than 25 covers for Time magazine. He engaged fantastically well with his audience and regaled us with his fly-on-the-wall encounters with famous and notorious characters such as Obama, Putin, Clinton, Bush, Chavez, Mugabe, Gaddafi and many more.

Captain Mark Kelly is one of only two individuals who have visited the International Space Station on four different occasions. He flew combat missions during the Gulf War and was commander on Space Shuttle Endeavour on its final flight in 2011. We listened intently to this incredible tale before he blew us away with the story of his wife, Gabrielle Giffords, a US representative and member of Congress, sustained gunshot wounds to the head from a would-be assassin in Tucson in 2011. Her road to recovery has been long and hard but borne bravely. Gabrielle joined him on stage for the finale to tumultuous applause.

'You will seldom meet a crowd on the extra mile.'

MDRT Speaks was new to the conference format and was, by any standards, a busy agenda. Featuring 11 presentations, audience participation, a panel discussion and nostalgic videos from past great conferences, it was a resounding success in my opinion. A common theme shone through from two of the outstanding speakers - Mark Sanborn, who has presented more than 2,400 speeches and seminars in every State and a dozen countries, and Don Connelly whose mission it is to help financial professionals simplify their process and attain the right frame of mind to always know what to say, when to say it and how to say it for maximum impact.

- Engage in extraordinary thinking, as in proactive reflection
- Am I achieving my goals and pursuing my potential?
- Has our service made our clients successful?
- How can you become the best and continue to get better?
- Soft skills set you apart. Clients must like you and trust you... care for them and go the extra mile.

New session types were added to this year's conference, including Cornerstone Presentations and Echo Sessions, not to mention close to 50 focus sessions covering every topic from social media, practice management and wealth management to inspirational tales, sales ideas and strategy, backed by an army of 88 different speakers. Suffice to say time management and careful selection ahead of the conference are vital to maximise these superb opportunities.

Social and networking opportunities

"Laissez les bons temps rouler" (Let the good times roll) is the motto of New Orleans and having witnessed it first hand, believe you me, it is an apt description. A bit of advance research is recommended when visiting the major cities that host MDRT so as to avoid disappointment. A few of us dined in the Commanders Palace (voted no.1 in New Orleans in the past 5 years) and experienced the best of local cuisine in Pascalsmanale, a restaurant which opened its doors in 1913 and has survived two World Wars, the Great Depression and Hurricane Katrina. A cruise down the Mississippi on the Steamboat Natchez with brunch and a jazz band accompaniment was a nice way to spend a Sunday afternoon and to take in the sights and culture unique to Louisiana.



L to R – Myles Roban, Maurice Riordan, Fergus Hanly, Brian Kearney, Maurice Hedderman, and Mark Hedderman

There are no strangers at MDRT, just friends you haven't met! Your personalised name badge will attract a lot of attention from fellow attendees and we insurance people are not shy to engage. For those contemplating attending for the first time be assured the MDRT family awaits you with a special social event hosted each night. There is a sizable Irish contingent and amongst the group I socially engaged with were Brendan Glennon, Maurice and Mark Hedderman, Patrick McEntee, James Caron, Diarmuid Kelly, Fergus Hanly, Maurice Riordan and Myles Roban, to mention but a few. An Irish/UK night was convened on the last night with much ceoil agus craic.

One cannot underestimate the networking opportunities and the chance to learn from each other when time is undisrupted and the company is easy and giving. We all need time to re-energise, analyse and reflect. MDRT provides the platform to shape your knowledge with your peers and to gain new perspectives from the many guest speakers, educational sessions and networking opportunities. Personally, I found it a stimulating, entertaining and rewarding experience because, quite simply, MDRT is the place where the best in the world share their insights and ideas.

For more information on MDRT contact Patrick McEntee at patrickmcenteedmrt@gmail.com.

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